



Hannah Clague, 21, with her competition entries. Hannah won a gold medal in hairdressing and was awarded best in nation.

Picture: Nick Linford

UK gets ahead at EuroSkills 2012

Reporting from Spa, Belgium

See pages 10 to 12

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From left: Nick Linford, editor of FE Week, David Way, interim chief executive of the National Apprenticeship Service and Shane Mann, director of operations at FE Week, at EuroSkills 2012 in Belgium.

Apprenticeships fall 10 per cent

Chris Henwood

@chris_henwood

The government has conceded that under 19 apprenticeships were proving a “major challenge” after official figures showed a 10 per cent fall in the number of starts.

The number of 16 to 18-year-olds who started apprenticeships in the final quarter of the last academic year dropped 5,200 from the previous year to 22,000.

The figures, from the latest statistical first release, also showed how the total number of starts last year was 126,300 — a two per cent decrease on 2010/11.

It was the first dip since 2008/09, when there were 99,400 starts.

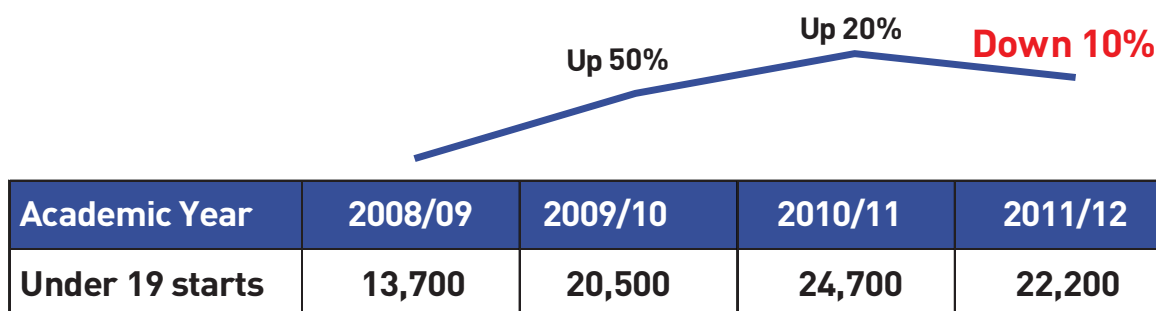
The government had hoped to hit 133,500 16 to 18 apprenticeship starts for the last financial year and for 2012/13 was aiming at 140,200, with the Education Funding Agency setting aside £833m.

However, the latest figures could still be updated, and across all apprenticeship age groups they showed a 9.9 per cent rise last year to 505,200 starts.

A joint statement from the government and the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) said: “It is encouraging that despite being rigorous on quality and introducing tougher standards, apprenticeships are growing overall.

“Not surprisingly, raising the level of participation in apprenticeships

Under 19 apprenticeship fourth quarter starts*



*Provisional figures, as published in October/November SFR each year

among 16 to 18-year-olds is a major challenge within a difficult economic climate and the latest figures reflect that.”

FE Minister Matthew Hancock said: “Hitting the half-million mark is a momentous achievement for this government’s apprenticeship programme.

“It shows our passion for skills, and is a ringing endorsement from employers and apprentices alike, who are reaping the benefits of a more highly-skilled workforce.

“This rise comes despite tougher rules to make apprenticeships more rigorous.”

But the falling apprentice figures come just months after the government tried to boost numbers by allowing more businesses to ask for training grants worth £1,500.

Only firms recruiting 16 to 24-year-olds with less than 250 employees could apply the Apprenticeship Grant

for Employers, but the change meant employers with less than 1,000 staff could also apply. Up to 40,000 grants are being provided.

Shadow FE Minister Gordon Marsden said: “The statistics highlight the Tory-led government’s failure to achieve enough take-up of quality apprenticeships for young people crying out for these opportunities.

“The fact the number of 16 to 18 apprentices has fallen in comparison to last year also shows their failure to properly engage with businesses or to convince them to participate in taking on apprentices in the current economic climate.

“We would take action by using public procurement and government contracts to boost apprenticeship places. Ministers need to get a grip and urgently boost apprenticeship opportunities for young people, but they have refused to back our plans or acknowledge the findings of the Holt

report they commissioned.

“What’s more, the fact that the numbers dropped steeply in the final quarter suggest this decline could be an accelerating trend.”

With the outcome of Doug Richard’s review of apprenticeships due out soon, an Association of Employment and Learning Providers spokesperson also called for a new pre-apprenticeship programme.

“The economic conditions are obviously a factor in terms of employers being able to offer places,” they said.

“Moreover, employers are raising the bar on entry requirements for full apprentices and this is why we feel a comprehensive pre-apprenticeship programme is now needed.”

And Association of Colleges skills policy manager Teresa Frith said: “Many young people are not being given the appropriate advice and guidance about options post-16.”

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Ela Piotrowska interview



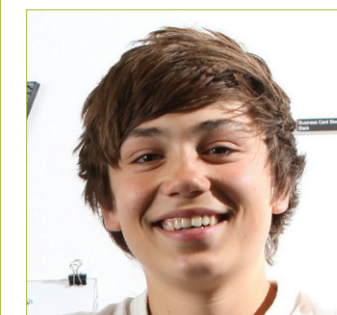
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Top apprenticeship tweets:



@RDarlo

New #apprenticeships for young people have actually fallen, though the total is up



@joncarr1977

Overall #Apprenticeships numbers up approx 10% I think? All because of growth in adult numbers of course



@SteveBesley

Latest stats on under 19 apprenticeship starts show we need a traineeship system. Over to you Doug Richard



@jp_clifton

Welcome rise in #apprenticeships - but nearly half of new apprenticeships gone to over 25s not young people



@GeorgiePK

Perhaps a necessary result of the measures taken to prevent "hot-house" apps. Quality over quantity is good in my view!

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Provider hits back at 'unfounded claim'

Chris Henwood

@chris_henwood

The boss of an Essex-based training provider has said a local college was refusing to pay its apprenticeship bill amid an "unfounded claim" his firm had gone bust.

John Baker, managing director of DB Training, issued a statement on his firm's website that said no funding had been received from Harlow College for "the past two months".

It is understood the alleged unpaid amount stands at around £311k.

Mr Baker's online statement adds: "There have been quite a number of rumours floating around about DB Training, including that the business has folded as well as not being open for apprentices.

"While we are experiencing extremely challenging times, all centres are open and able to accommodate the apprentices that wish to continue to receive training and support for their apprenticeship.

"We believe the claims made by Harlow College have no foundation and we are rigorously contesting the claims."

A spokesperson at the college, which had business, property and IT apprenticeships with DB Training, confirmed there had been a dispute, but declined to say if it owed the firm any money.

"Harlow College is extremely aware of its responsibilities in relation to government funding and the importance of transparency and accountability in dealing with those funds," she said.

"Certain issues have arisen regarding an external training provider that has caused us a degree of concern.

"We are working with all interested parties to establish clarity."

She added: "Harlow College is fully committed to ensuring the education of students attending the college via this outside agency continues uninterrupted."

DB Training, which has three main training centres in Rayleigh, Chelmsford and Colchester, plus a satellite centre in Clacton, first swapped contracts with the college in 2008/09.

It now also deals with Colchester Institute as a prime contractor and last academic year had a combined income from college and institute contracts of around £3m.

But, said Mr Baker's online statement: "The income received from Harlow College amounts to more than 90 per cent of our income so this has prevented us from meeting our financial obligations.

"This in turn has had a detrimental financial impact on a number of other companies."

The statement continues with information for apprentices and learners on training centre opening hours and tutor availability.

Nevertheless, the college spokesperson said: "The education and welfare of our students is paramount in everything we do at Harlow College.

"We are fully committed to ensuring the learning process continues unabated for students who attend our college via this third party training provider.

"The future of our students is of the utmost importance to us and we are determined to continue to offer them the skills and training that will equip them to carry on with their chosen vocation."

She added: "We will ensure all relevant government and education bodies are kept aware of all developments."

Mr Baker declined to add to his online statement when contacted by *FE Week*.

Firms primed for new status after success on apprentices

Chris Henwood

@chris_henwood

Two Midland-based training providers have made the shift from delivering apprenticeships for lead providers to dealing directly with the Skills Funding Agency following success in a pilot scheme.

Leicestershire's Steve Walker Associates (SWA) and Derbyshire's Aspire Achieve Advance (3AAA) have become prime contractors for the first time after winning deals with the agency.

The reward follows the two firms' successes in a pilot launched in July that aimed to boost apprenticeship numbers for 16 to 24-year-olds.

And an agency spokesperson said other subcontractors could be in line for similar shifts to prime contractor status.

It comes eight years after SWA was established and just four years after 3AAA, which said it had 150 workers and a turnover of nearly £17m for 2011/21, was set up.

Martin Rennison, operations director at SWA, said his firm's £500k prime contract would deliver around 150 apprenticeships.

It runs apprenticeships covering IT, warehouse and storage, and business administration, among others. It had five subcontractor deals in May with lead providers including Wincanton and DHL, totalling just over £1m.

"We're very, very proud that we have been awarded our first prime contract and we're determined to hit our targets and hopefully go beyond them," said Mr Rennison.

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Subcontractors courted by SFA into direct relationship

Nick Summers
@SummersNicholas

Subcontractors with a total allocation of more than £1 million are being offered a direct contract by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA).

Businesses were sent a letter by the SFA in mid-January encouraging them to bid for a contract worth at least £500,000 as part of a one-off funding pilot by the agency.

The letter says successful bidders will receive funding for 16 months to deliver full apprenticeship frameworks aimed at learners of all ages, provided they can begin the delivery from April and enroll a quarter of predicted learners by August.

The SFA says the pilot is designed to "test the appetite" of large subcontractors which have the capacity to move to a direct contractual relationship with the agency.

A spokesperson for the SFA told *FE Week*: "This is intended as a pilot to inform the potential introduction of a structured long term process to introduce new entrants to the education and training market, providing the Agency with access to additional capacity to deliver high quality learning opportunities to communities and businesses across the country."

The pilot, which the SFA says "will help the funding requirements of organisations can be met by 2012/13, will be a significant step forward for the industry."

FE Week news in brief

Fraudster warning

Professional fraudsters are targeting the FE sector, the Skills Funding Agency has warned.

In the Agency's latest Update, a statement reads: "Recently, we have been made aware that the further education sector may be subject to approaches by professional fraudsters, who are writing to providers requesting a change of bank account details for outstanding payments for the supply of goods and services."

"The requests have all the hallmarks of being genuine and suggest a targeted operation."

They remind staff to remain vigilant, particularly at the end of the financial year in April.

SFA to offer access

Views are being sought on the new Provider Access Project.

"The Project will allow providers to view their contract-related data held by the Skills Funding Agency and forms part of the commitment to share information more efficiently."

A survey will be launched on March 7.

In particular, the survey will focus on types and methods of sharing information, identifying the priorities and benefits to the FE sector.

The deadline for the survey will be April 5.

UKCES tender update

The publication of the tender documents for The Employer Ownership of Skills pilot has been delayed.

The tender documents are expected to be published in the next few days.

How FE Week reported the SFA's pilot scheme in March

The cost of 3AAA's new prime contract was not disclosed by the firm to *FE Week*. It had nine subcontractor deals in May with lead providers including Bedford College, Walsall College and South Staffordshire College, totalling nearly £10m.

Di McEvoy-Robinson, joint director at 3AAA, said: "We have worked hard for this recognition. There are few providers who are successful each year in securing their own contract and we have gone through a rigorous competitive tender process. Most importantly it is an endorsement of the quality of our delivery and services to apprentices."

An agency spokesperson, who also declined to reveal the size of 3AAA's new prime contract, said: "3AAA was one of a number of organisations that were successful in a recent pilot procurement to expand apprenticeships.

"The organisations invited into the pilot were based on a number of criteria includ-

ing holding aggregate subcontract values of over £500k as declared on the subcontractor register published on the agency's website on May 31, had passed the due diligence assurance gateway as at May 2012 and selected apprenticeships as a programme area they wanted to deliver.

"The pilot was a procurement exercise and was operated within procurement guidelines and managed through the Agency's e tendering portal. All organisations that applied were informed of the decisions in relation to their application through the e-tendering portal in September 2012. The agency operated the normal stand still period for procurement decisions and is unable to comment further until contracts have been signed."

She added: "Contracts are currently being finalised. We will publish on our website the contract values as part of the regular refresh of our contracting position."



Ged Syddall, owner of Elmfield Training, giving evidence to the BIS select committee in March

Holly Welham

@hollywelham

A training provider that helped deliver one of the UK's biggest apprenticeship programmes at Morrisons is shedding a third of its 600-strong workforce, it has been claimed.

Two in every three of Elmfield Training staff were warned on October 4 they could be facing redundancy, according to a worker who wanted to remain anonymous.

Documents that appear to be from the company, leaked to *FE Week*, list jobs in business support, finance and communications, among others, as "at risk".

Elmfield Training described the information as "inaccurate", but failed to say whether

Elmfield Training 'tells 400' staff their jobs are at risk

any job losses were planned.

However, the documents supplied to *FE Week* highlighted how 157 of the planned job losses would be from positions on Elmfield's bumper contract with Morrisons.

It follows a May consultation on redundancies that was reported in *FE Week*. However, the number of job losses on that occasion was not disclosed.

And the anonymous member of Elmfield staff said there was new anger at the firm's alleged job loss consultation branding it "unfair" on staff.

They also said there were fears the cuts could affect learners.

"We're not being treated with any consideration," they added.

"We've been told the consultation is going to last 30 days, but would like it to last 90 days. We think that would be fair to us and fair to our clients.

"It would be nice to have been given 90 days bearing in mind that we've put around 100,000 learners through for them. And learners will suffer."

They said staff would be told whether they had one of the 196 "at risk" posts that would

remain on November 4, and those that had not got a position would be given 30 days' notice.

"Morale is the lowest I've ever known it," they added.

"We have gone through this before, but last time everyone was kept in the loop. We feel like we've all been left in the lurch. We all need the money, to pay off mortgages and stuff like that."

A spokesperson for Elmfield, which was allocated £41m by the Skills Funding Agency for the current academic year, described the redundancy figures supplied to *FE Week* as "inaccurate, selective and misleading".

"In our considered view, it is singularly unconstructive to focus on second-hand chit chat when the real investigation should be into the challenges confronting training providers and employers who want to help young people make the transition from education into work," she said.

"That's what is most critical for the employment and skills system at the moment."

A spokesperson for Morrisons, which has been delivered around 100,000 apprenticeships by Elmfield since October 2009, said it had "confidence" in the scheme.

"Our apprenticeship programmes have been mapped to the national apprenticeship framework," he said.

"These standards are determined by the Sector Skills Council which in our case is SkillSmart Retail."

He added that Morrisons' contract with Elmfield was up for review in 2013, when it was "likely to go out to tender".

The latest alleged shake-up at Elmfield comes around eight months after its boss, Ged Syddall, was grilled by MPs on a business, innovation and skills select committee.

He told the committee he had received 95 per cent of a £3 million dividend for their 2009/10 financial year.

"I set this business up from nothing and now we have 750 people," Mr Syddall told MPs.

"The other thing we have done over the last three years, is 40 per cent of post-tax profits have gone into social impact programmes, which helped thousands of young people back into employment. From every £1 I've taken out in the last three or four years, I've put £2 back to helping other people who have not been as lucky as me."

College principal stands down amid 'deficit issues'

Holly Welham

@hollywelham

Bosses at a Kent college have revealed plans to balance an £11m budget deficit within two years following the blow of losing their principal.

A spokesperson for K College said a recovery plan had been drawn up with Bill Fearon having quit amid industrial action by around 150 protestors.

He resigned on Monday night, October 8, while staff demonstrated outside a governors' meeting over plans to shed 145 jobs.

A college spokesperson said Mr Fearon would leave at Christmas and an interim principal would be appointed.

"We will appoint an interim principal to oversee the implementation of the recovery plan that will address the college's budget deficit issues," said the spokesperson.

"This plan aims to return college finances to a balanced budget within two years."

The college has said falling student numbers, central government funding cuts and the cost of running several sites were behind the deficit along with a delay in money owed from the sale of land.

It comes after *FE Week* last week revealed the college was the first provider to get a government warning that could lead to the withdrawal of Skills Funding Agency cash.

An agency spokesperson said Mr Fearon's resignation would have "no direct bearing" on the notice of concern it issued in August.

"I am obviously very sorry to be leaving under the present circumstances, but as the manager with ultimate responsibility for all

that the college does and achieves, it is appropriate," said the principal.

"I have been extremely proud to have been a principal at West Kent and K College, not least due to the commitment and achievements of the staff in the 10 years I have been in post.

"K College has done extremely well in its first two years in many respects, particularly with regard to student performance, and will go from strength to strength while the financial issues are resolved and beyond.

"I will be working full-on until the end of term with colleagues to ensure the New Year brings a stable position for a successful 2013."

Laura Ellis, chair of the college governors, said: "Bill has spent ten years with the college as principal and overseen some of its most significant developments.

"He has seen the college grow substantially through its recent merger, developing a state of the art campus in Tonbridge and forging new and innovative relationships with the communities and learners served by the college in its five towns. He goes with our best wishes."

Michael Moran, University and College Union regional official, said: "There are clearly considerable problems at K College and Monday's governors' meeting made it clear that there was little agreement on what the best next steps are.

"Hopefully a change at the top will allow everyone at K College to work together to try to resolve the mess and preserve jobs and educational opportunities for the people of Kent.

"What remains absolutely clear is the need for a proper look at the accounts and more money from the funding agencies."



Bill Fearon, outgoing principal of K College

"K College will go from strength to strength while the financial issues are resolved"

*Editor's comment***Numbers game**

To understand the decline in 16 to 18 apprenticeship starts, we need to consider the impact of changes to the definition of an apprenticeship.

The government blames the economic conditions, but there is nothing new there – the truth is much closer to home.

The Coalition passed legislation – drawn up by the Labour Party in power – with the effect of bringing an end to programme-led apprenticeships.

These apprenticeships were popular with thousands of unemployed 16 to 18-year-olds at training providers like Zenos (now Pearson in Practice).

Many programme-led apprenticeships continue to be delivered legitimately, but under the title access to apprenticeships with providers such as the De Vere Academy.

However, crucially, unlike the old programme-led apprenticeships, access to apprenticeships are not counted in government apprenticeship statistics until the learner has got a job.

Hidden away in the latest figures [SFR table 19.1 note 4] we find that 5,400 apprenticeships across all ages were on the access to apprenticeship scheme

But a staggering 4,300 (80 per cent) remain unemployed. Some learners may yet become employed, but the SFA funding rules say providers should have no more than 10 per cent.

So in truth, the pre-2011/12 figures were inflated as they contained, I estimate, tens of thousands of unemployed learners.

To repeat, today these learners would not be counted as apprenticeships.

So let's stop blaming the economy, and focus on policies that help as many 16 to 18-year-olds get the education and training they deserve.

Nick Linford, editor

Colleges underdeliver by '£45m to £60m'

The Association of Colleges (AoC) has estimated that colleges failed to deliver between £45m and £60m of adult provision last year as a result of policy changes.

It warned funding may need to be returned in 2013, despite a change in reconciliation rules announced this month that allow underdelivering colleges to hold onto Skills Funding Agency cash from 2011/12.

Julian Gravatt, AoC assistant chief executive, told *FE Week*: "The 2011/12 funding round was particularly difficult because of changes to funding rules and rates made at great speed following the 2010 spending review.

"Some of these decisions were later amended during 2011 and a different approach was taken by government for 2012/13.

"We estimate that, at the end of 2011/12, colleges would have been unable to use about £45m to £60m.

"Colleges keep the funds now, but may have to hand it back in 2013. This will make an already tough budget round in 2013/14 even harder. Loans and new initiatives funded from the skills budget mean core funding allocations are likely to be cut by an average of 10 per cent or more."

The AoC warning comes after an industry source told *FE Week* the amount of underdelivery among all providers for the last academic year stood at £630m — nearly 17 per cent of the agency's £3.8bn allocation fund.

The agency had said it "did not recognise" the £630m figure, but also declined to reveal the underdelivery figure it currently had. It has also failed to comment on the AoC's figure for underdelivery among colleges.

An agency spokesperson said: "Providers have until November to make their final returns against the 2011/12 contracting year and at that point we will have final data on

the value of activity delivered by the FE sector in 2011/12.

"We operate in-year performance management for providers. This means we can be assured funding is used for the benefit of learners and employers and those funds are allocated and reallocated in direct response to learner and employer demand.

"Using the latest information from the sector in November we will make any necessary changes to make sure funding continues to support demand now and into 2012/13."

However, Graham Hoyle, chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP), called for new providers to step in where targets were not being met.

"If underperforming colleges and providers are not meeting their targets, then their business should be shifted to good quality providers who can show demand from employers and learners," he said.

"If the agency's reconciliation rules are being relaxed too much in favour of underperforming institutions, that would seem to be running against the thrust of recent reforms and would be in danger of turning the agency back into a centralised supply-led planner.

And when the FE and skills sector needs to fight to protect its overall budget with a new government spending review on the horizon, it is inexcusable for poor performance to be protected."

David Hughes, chief executive of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and a former director at the Skills Funding Agency, said: "Any underspend represents missed opportunities for thousands of adults to learn and we regret that, but it was clear that the changes in eligibility made it very challenging for many colleges and providers to earn their allocations fully."



Julian Gravatt, AoC assistant chief executive



Graham Hoyle, chief executive of AELP



David Hughes, chief executive of NIACE

Corrections

Campus round-up is always a great source of well-natured tales and colourful pics in *FE Week*.

And it's rightly thought the recent inclusion of names to accompany said smiley images serves to enhance the section.

How frustrating then, when celebrity chef Marco Pierre White was spotted in an image holding aloft a lid in front of a catering student's face.

Sorry we didn't spot the obstruction earlier to ask for another pic, Ross Pearce.

Have you spotted something wrong with this edition of *FE Week*?

If so, feel free to tell us about it, including the page number and story headline, and explain what the problem is. Email us at news@feweek.co.uk with Corrections in the subject line.

Comments

Learners 'miss out on £630m' as SFA discover underdelivery

This position was not a surprise and was easily identifiable from the outset. Skills Funding Agency policy on funding and eligibility continues to cause chaos across the sector and deprives people in need from accessing the only escape route from deprivation that makes sense. Coalition out.
Eugene Greco

The cynic in me thinks that this is a deliberate attempt to at underspend. Make it hard for FE to draw down funds and suddenly find a whopping £630m to hand back to the treasury. They need £40m after cocking up the rail franchise deal.
Bernie M

There are many training providers who do not hold a direct contract with the Skills Funding Agency (and not for the want of trying) who could have supported in delivering this underspend.

What a shame!
Esu Hill

Those of us who struggled this year because we had not the heart to turn people away because they couldn't pay, are astonished that colleges have been allowed to keep the money for underperformance.

We in the voluntary community sector taught many that were turned away from colleges for 50 per cent of the funds. Maybe that money should be redistributed fairly?
C Roberts

Have you got something to say about FE or one of our stories?

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Or, you can write to us at *FE Week*, 161-165 Greenwich High Road, London SE10 8JA.

Full contact details should be provided and can be withheld by *FE Week* upon request.

FE Week profile

Ela Piotrowska ~ her story

Holly Welham

@hollywelham

The principal of Morley College talks to *FE Week*

London in the aftermath of World War Two was a hard place for many, including the Piotrowska family.

It had promised so much with Ela Piotrowska's father, Stasio, having reached safety after fleeing the Nazi occupation of his native Poland, having walked hundreds of miles across Europe to join the Polish Free Army, in Scotland.

And her mother, Marysia, arrived in Britain after American liberation from Oberlangen Concentration Camp, in Germany, where she had been sent for her part in the Polish Resistance.

For although they met and married here, the joy of a new life was not unbridled — the experience of being “aliens” in their new home troubled them, says Piotrowska, who was born less than a decade after Hitler's forces had been defeated.

However, the threat posed by Soviet dictator Stalin and his growing Eastern Bloc territories ensured there would be no return to Poland.

“It was very difficult after the war — we were called aliens and I always felt an outsider,” says the principal of South London's Morley College.

“I have very few memories of that period. I think I just blanked it all out. I didn't like school very much, but you have to get on with it.”

Although there were struggles to fit in, Marysia managed to get work from the family home in Shepherd's Bush, London, making clothes for a factory, while Stasio had a job making handbags in a factory and later worked as a plasterer.

“Adult education had always been a sort of a Cinderella service”

Marysia and Stasio wanted their family, including younger daughter Krysia, to settle and they saw education as a means to achieving that goal.

“It was all about having a better life than they had, and not working manually and physically. They aspired to something that was outside the possibilities for them,” says mum-of-two Ela Piotrowska, 61.

“Education was the vehicle for mobility and managing really. My parents thought it was the only way I was going to be somebody that was accepted in this society.”

But when she started school she struggled as she spoke very little English. And she went on to fail the 11-plus.

However, Marysia remained adamant her daughter should go to a “good” school and was “so bolshy” she eventually persuaded a grammar school to accept Piotrowska.

It was the start of an upward educational trajectory that took in sociology at the University of Kent, before primary school teacher training.

“I'm privileged because I have worked in a sector that is congruent with my values”

In the 1970s, while working in schools in Brixton, she became involved in setting up community outreach programmes, including family classes.

It was seeing first-hand the benefits of such schemes, that piqued Piotrowska's interest in working with marginalised and adult groups.

And, following the birth of daughter Emily around 1978, she moved solely into adult education.

But, after almost 20 years of teaching adults, Piotrowska says she wanted to gain a wider understanding of the sector and moved to Ofsted, where she then spent 11 years working as an inspector.

While at Ofsted, she helped develop a framework for the inspection of adult teaching, that “considerably” raised the profile of adult learning.

“Adult education had always been a sort of a Cinderella service,” she suggests.

“There had been fantastic practices, but it was much neglected by local authorities and constantly reorganised.”

Her time as an inspector also took her into the work place to see people learning on the job.

“It was very powerful seeing all of that,” says Piotrowska, who shares a home in Balham, London, with partner Les.

“Seeing how what we do in colleges makes a contribution on the job. I learned a tremendous amount. It was inspiring.”

But the call of a principal title came for her the first time four years ago from Morley College.

The college in Lambeth, London, specialises in adult education courses and she was passionate about its diverse intake, pointing to the 130 languages spoken by students last year.

“One of the powerful things about adult education is that you can sit in a class and there could be somebody sitting with a different language, completely different background, maybe not very literate, alongside somebody who's got two degrees. That is very special,” she says.

“I've been very lucky in my career. I've always liked what I've done and I'm privileged



because I have worked in a sector that is congruent with my values.”

One of the things she loves most about working at Morley College is watching students confidence build when they perform or showcase their work.

“If I'm really overwhelmed with paperwork there's often a student concert that I can listen to, I can visit an exhibition, or I go to the canteen and talk to some students, I plonk myself at the table and we have a chat. Those things are great pleasures,” she says.

“I go to a concert or an exhibition and I think ‘this is what it's about’. It's so wonderful to hear people who are not professionals, who are just learning, have the opportunity to show their work. They get such self-esteem from it. They think, ‘I never believed I could do something like that’. It is the most powerful thing.”

It's a personal thing

What's your favourite book?

Lost in Translation by Eva Hoffman

What did you want to be when you were younger?

Anthropologist

What do you do to switch off from work?

Cook, read, see family and friends, and learn to ride a bike

Who, living or dead, would you invite to dinner party?

My mother

What would your super power be?

Stop time to reflect — time passes too fast

FE Week Experts

The truth behind the 16-18 apprenticeship problem



Falling apprenticeship numbers among 16 to 18-year-olds have come as no surprise to Peter Cobrin, from Apprenticeships England, who looks at how to stop any further declines.

So now the truth is out — government figures reveal a ten per cent fall in 16-18 apprenticeships.

Let me provide some answers as to why this is the case.

Employability skills are not embedded within and across the curriculum, 16-year-olds don't get the message and as a result FE colleges are treated as parking lots for too many young people as local employers simply fail to engage with apprenticeships.

Add to these, the facts that too many schools are failing to fulfil their broader social obligations as they chase qualifications as the ultimate object of their existence.

Information advice and guidance has also collapsed as the government bumbles along with its host of misguided, uncoordinated, expensive and largely-ignored online initiatives, and the ending of programme led apprenticeships following a concerted media-driven campaign.

So how can firms be encouraged and incentivised to take on more 16 to 18-year-olds? And does throwing money at employers make a difference.

My view is that the Apprenticeships Grant for Employers is a great bonus for employers, but an insignificant incentive.

Any sensible employer would eagerly employ a young person if it served his business interests, as a recent survey from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills confirmed.

So why doesn't the government respond to these motivators rather than just throwing a few quid at the problem. We know why employers hire young people — new

recruits formally trained bring in new skills, it brings young blood into the company, supports upskilling of existing members of the workforce — as Morrisons and others have discovered, training one's own ensures a better fit between the skills of employees and workplace needs and more cost effective to train one's own employees because they may be likely to stay.

So let's target what works. We need measures to create specific and supported pathways into work for young people, especially where labour markets are weakest.

This should be employer-led and both community and government-supported. It requires an honest understanding of why employers are resistant to employing this cohort and it means meeting these concerns.

Let's acknowledge the risk profile of recruiting 16-year-olds and reduce or mitigate this risk.

This is a view I share with the 16-24 Alliance, whose founder members include Morrisons, Barclays, Eon, Phones4u and training provider Elmfield.

They have designed and run tightly-focused employability programmes to maximise the chances of young people getting into hard-to-teach opportunities despite less than adequate qualifications.

Another key element is schools, working with local and national employers at KS4 in taking a specific role in defining employability attributes, and then putting in place programmes to develop them within and beyond the school timetable.

For example, providing access to pre-employment programme, real work placement, employability training, labour market skills, summer employability boot camps after GCSEs.

Where a school works with employers, as for example around the rightly-praised JCB Academy, in Staffordshire, the results are fantastic.

One hundred apprenticeship jobs have been created as a direct result of its focus on the engineering diplomas. But the story gets better.

Despite, or I would insist, because of, its focus on vocational learning underpinning more formal academic achievement, a total of 99 per cent of the first students to receive their GCSEs at the Staffordshire academy received grades A* to C.

So when schools, employers and communities work together, we can buck the trend of decline both in terms of employment and academic achievement.

And as a final point, training providers need be supported in working with this sector. This is especially so for sub-contractors who work with the hardest to reach groups, members of whom make up the bulk of the rapidly increasing reservoir of the unemployed, and unemployable whose existence shames us all.

*Peter Cobrin,
Apprenticeships England*



“Colleges are failing to make effective use of technology, with a debilitating effect on their ability to achieve policy goals”

What's to show for tech cash?

The benefits of new technology are not being fully felt at colleges across the country, prompting former Barnsley college principal and Toshiba education adviser Bob Harrison to question whether a government aim to bring all classrooms up to the digital age is achievable.

The annual Association of Colleges (AoC) technology survey last month paints an unsurprisingly gloomy picture and reinforces what Martin Bean, vice chancellor of the Open University, described at the 2009 Association of Learning Technology conference as the “growing crisis of relevance” in colleges.

This, two years after the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency closed, the Harnessing Technology strategy, and the dumping of ring-fenced funding by the incoming government.

Yet there has been plenty of money channelled through agencies that could have been used to address the issues of staff skills and strategic leadership.

Questions must be asked of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) and the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) about the lack of progress given the level of investments.

Who is accountable for setting and achieving targets? Or is this a fundamental vulnerability of a sector-led system?

The survey executive summary says: “The ability of colleges to implement the education policy agenda, and deliver the required policy outcomes, relies not simply on investment in technology infrastructure and systems, but also on the ability to manage the deployment of that technology in ways that best meets the specific requirements of the individual college.”

It goes on to identify points that have been common knowledge to those with experience and expertise in implementing technology strategies in other education sectors. Namely, “its not about the technology, it's about new ways of thinking”.

More than a year ago, I attempted to raise

the issue in my Wanted Pioneers piece, which seemed to fall upon deaf ears at BIS and LSIS.

It is no surprise therefore the survey exposes how colleges are failing to make effective use of technology, with a debilitating effect on their ability to achieve policy goals.

Specifically, it suggests colleges need to improve the relevance and structure of staff training in the use of technology across the curriculum. Further improvements are needed, it says, by way of a whole college approach to strategic planning in the use of technology, representation on senior management team for the development of technology strategy, efficient purchasing that takes into account collaborative initiatives such as shared services and migration of some services to cloud technologies.

Technology resourcing as a core function of college processes needs to be looked at, too, along with specific funding for e-learning development.

The survey goes on to suggest areas in which technology is perceived to be least effective are widening participation, reducing digital exclusion, engaging students with disabilities and learning difficulties, and improving retention and achievement.

Meanwhile, the aim of the government is to “ensure a clear sector-owned policy to support outstanding teaching and learning including making the full use of the potential of technology”.

If the AoC survey is any indication of the reality in colleges then it looks like the government's aim is not being achieved despite the enormous resources given to JISC, regional support centres and LSIS to achieve just that. To their credit AoC joined forces with ALT earlier this year in organising the well-attended conference entitled Large Scale Curriculum Redesign Using Technology, which drew on the experience of colleges trying to meet this digital challenge.

I wonder what the FE minister Matthew Hancock makes of all this?

Will he be bothered? He should be.

*Bob Harrison, former Barnsley College
principal and Toshiba education adviser*

FE Week Experts

Lies, damned lies, and UKBA statistics

Professor Daniel Khan OBE, chief executive of Open College Network (OCN) London, reacts to UK Border Agency (UKBA) criticism of FE Colleges.

UKBA's recent comments with regards to FE colleges are both unfair and misleading. It claimed colleges are guilty of selling 'immigration rather than education'. It stated that its tightening of the requirements for providers to achieve Highly Trusted Status was aimed specifically at FE colleges.

Yet, their accusations entirely misrepresent the FE sector and imply all colleges are guilty of masquerading as genuine institutions, while really acting as a means for international students to gain a visa.

In truth, of the 40,000 FE learners who come to the UK to study, the vast majority attend one of the hundreds of state-supported reputable and well-respected institutions.

It is therefore unacceptable for FE colleges to be universally branded as 'bogus' by the UKBA. Such remarks follow Ofsted chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw's caution against international students in his Deptford not Delhi speech. Each of these instances suggests a worrying future for FE colleges and their hopes of attracting international learners.

This reluctance to value education as an export compares poorly against other countries.

In Australia, education is the third largest export industry, contributing £11bn a-year to an economy smaller than the UK's.

Yet, in the UK we seem reluctant to regard it as an export sector at all. Instead, FE colleges are labelled as a route for illegal immigration and a threat to the educational opportunities of domestic learners.

The UKBA's comments are focused on the minority of small private colleges who have hit the headlines for their part in visa scams.

The colleges that deserve publicity are those that are state-supported and committed to their role as student immigration sponsors.

It is these providers who are at risk of losing their international intake, an integral part of their student body and vital to their reputation.

The UK is in danger of forcing international students to look elsewhere, primarily to its chief competitors such as Australia and America.

Hence, while the UKBA seems intent on discouraging international students to pursue FE in the UK, there are thriving projects taking place in colleges across the country to do the reverse.

For example, The Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education has been incredibly successful in attracting overseas learners and investment.

Grimsby has built a reputation for inter-

national excellence in the seafood industry and relies heavily on foreign investment and expertise. In particular, the institute won United Nations Industrial Development Organisation contracts to advise on ports and logistics, as well as the seafood industry, in developing countries. Grimsby achieved the highest rating from the UKBA as a trusted sponsor.

Furthermore, as part of the Prime Minister's initiative for international education, several London colleges have forged links with Chinese education providers. Phase two of this initiative, which was launched in 2006, focused on the importance of FE colleges in establishing international partnerships.

As a result, London and Chinese vocational education providers have developed a scheme to support the increasing need for higher level specialist and technical skills in both countries.

The project is of mutual benefit for both nations and is, from the British perspective, intended to promote UK education and qualifications to the world's fastest growing major economy.

The Association of Colleges has supported the initiative with its development of an International Charter. This charter seeks to promote colleges' work to foreign stakeholders — ensuring opportunities to reach the international education and skills market are sought. It also acts as a charter mark for colleges who are con-



ducting their international engagement work in an ethical and honest manner.

This charter is incredibly important in strengthening the international reputation of UK Colleges, especially in light of the recent criticisms.

The border agency should get its act together in controlling illegal immigration into the UK, rather than divert attention on to FE colleges.

The whole concept of foreign students being included in immigration figures is a farce and the government's talk of reducing immigration by reducing student numbers is reminiscent of Disraeli's famous "lies, damned lies, and statistics" quote.

Professor Daniel Khan OBE, chief executive of OCN London

Recruitment integrity call for functional skills regime

With functional skills now in place, providers should be taking the opportunity to make sure they are recruiting with integrity from the outset, says Runway Training's Oliver Trailor.

So the time has finally arrived — Key Skills and Skills For Life have finally gone.

For many, the introduction of a qualification that will serve to improve learners' maths, English and ICT skills with a robust final assessment is long overdue.

However, for some providers the impending introduction of functional skills has felt like the sword of Damocles hanging over them.

The functional skills system undoubtedly brings challenges for colleges and training providers alike.

While previous contributors to *FE Week* have written about the challenges with funding, timescales and delivery models, I feel little attention has been paid to an area in which so many providers fall down, that of initial and diagnostic assessment.

Assessment for assessment's sake appears to be the view of many. I understand many FE colleges carry out initial assessments en masse in August or September induction day.

This involves several hours' queuing and form-filling, with the poor learner being herded along a corridor, plonked in front of a computer screen or given paper to complete.

The purpose of the assessment is often not explained and the result not discussed.

In some ways, they are the more fortunate learners, as colleagues generally use purpose-built initial and diagnostic products.

Having spent part of the summer working with training providers to upskill their staff for functional skills delivery, I was shocked to discover the endless number of initial assessment methods being used.

Past papers, outdated multiple choice questionnaires, direct questioning and basic skills assessments are all in use and in my view very inadequate methods.

Given the importance of determining the learners' level of skill and their development needs we should be looking for a comprehensive assessment.

Skills Funding Agency rules for 2012/13 state, providers must, "undertake a robust initial assessment to determine the level at which the individual is currently operating". Furthermore they say that, "the tools must be administered by suitably qualified individuals".

So why then, does there appear to be a blatant disregard for the need for an effective initial assessment — one that establishes a learner's strengths and weaknesses, takes in to account previous achievements and builds an accurate spikey profile?

The time and cost of this important aspect of learners' development appears to be the



most common factor highlighted by providers. With so much to fit it in, initial assessment has become just another box-ticking exercise and if it can be completed in 10 minutes then all the better.

How can we expect to cater for our learners when we don't know where they are starting from? Can we really afford not to?

Furthermore for many providers, particularly those working with apprentices, recruitment has become a numbers game, with sales teams faced with monthly targets.

Given the importance of framework completion you would hope providers will recruit with more integrity, as the functional skills are seemingly more challenging.

Not getting learners to complete a proper initial assessment, thus establishing whether they were able to cope with the demands of the framework, is surely going to lead to

many in learning not completing.

Undoubtedly, a robust initial assessment session that establishes at what level a learner is working has a financial and resource cost.

However, there are numerous resources and many suitable off-the-shelf products available at a reasonable price.

Consider this — if learners aren't suitable for the programme, is it not better to establish this at interview, rather than three or four months into an apprenticeship?

If you are not using an effective initial assessment, then now is the time to consider a strategy for the benefit of your completion rate and bottom line, but far more importantly for the sake of your learners.

Oliver Trailor, partner and functional skills manager, Runway Training, Kent

FE Week campus round-up

Stacey Solomon returns to talk pregnancy



Television presenter Stacey Solomon (middle) with theatre students

Television presenter Stacey Solomon was greeted with great excitement by staff and students at a London college when she visited to film a documentary.

Stacey was studying for a national diploma in performing arts at Havering College when the X Factor shot her to fame in 2009.

She returned to the college for a BBC programme on teenage post-natal depression to talk about the support she received from staff when she discovered she was pregnant at 17.

The mum of four-year-old Zachary and new baby Leighton, four months, said she feared she wouldn't be able to have a career when she

found out she was pregnant.

"But when I told them at college, they were really good about it," she said.

While at the college Stacey joined in on a musical theatre class and gave words of encouragement to the new cohort of students.

"If you want to do something you can do it. It doesn't matter who you are or what your background is. You've got to work hard but you can do it," she told them.

Performing arts student Eden Bishop-Jones, 16, said: "Having Stacey come into our class and listen to us sing was great. I loved every minute of it."

Charity effort is student cup of tea



Farnborough student Kayleigh Chinery, 17, who is in year two of a food and beverage diploma, serves Linda Robinson, PA to the deputy principal. Pictured behind the bar is 17-year-old Ryan Wilson, also in year two of a food and beverage diploma

Freshly-baked cakes and cinnamon waffles helped students in Hampshire raise more than £500 for charity.

Farnborough College of Technology's coffee morning generated cash for Macmillan Cancer Support.

It was held in the college's Gallery training restaurant and saw queues form for sweet treats prepared and served by catering students.

They also had the chance to put barista skills picked up on their course into practice, serving frothy coffees and hot chocolates, complete with cream and marshmallows.

There was also a book sale and beautiful

bouquets for sale, prepared by floristry lecturer Hazel Woodman.

The event was rounded off with a charity raffle, where prizes ranged from food and drink to vouchers for the college hair and beauty salon.

Gwen Grace, catering lecturer, said: "This year's coffee morning was a great success and we were delighted to beat last year's total by raising more than £500.

"We would like to thank everyone who donated such lovely raffle prizes, including £100 of Red Letter Day vouchers, flowers and even window cleaning vouchers."



MidKent College carpentry student Karl Matthews, 18, during a charity trip to Kenya

Carpentry skills help Kenyan youngsters

Tears flowed as staff and students from a Kent college delivered emotional speeches about a fortnight trip to help out at a Kenyan orphanage.

A team from MidKent College, in Gillingham, delivered clothing, toys and other essential items to children at the Melon Education Centre, in poverty-stricken Nakuru earlier this year.

A seminar audience at the college heard how carpentry students also built a security fence around land purchased by the college on behalf of the orphanage.

"It was absolutely incredible. The reaction of the kids was the best thing about it by far. They were always happy and smiling and it made all the work we did for them worthwhile," said student carpenter Karl Matthews, 18.

"The trip has changed me massively and has shown me what the real world is like. It's definitely made me realise how lucky I am. It's such a great opportunity to be able to be out there helping those kids."

Each student who travelled to Kenya had to raise around £1,500 to pay for travel, accommodation and other expenses.

Weston College student wins X Factor reprieve

A Somerset student swapped graphic design for the guitar as he made it to the X Factor live shows.

George Shelley, 19, auditioned for the show having completed a BTEc in graphic design at Weston College.

He was ejected from the show's boot camp phase, but judge Louis Walsh asked him to join the three-piece band Triple J — now called Union J.

George said: "I'm having the most amazing time right now. We're rehearsing intensively for this weekend and I can hardly believe it's all happening, especially as I didn't make it through boot camp.

"I was so lucky to get another shot at it, and to get to Las Vegas. The guys in Union J are wicked. We've bonded really well and I'm so looking forward to this weekend."

Before he entered the X-Factor George, from Clevedon, had been on a gap year and planned to start a foundation degree in graphic design.

Rachael Heath, George's tutor, said: "I am so proud of George — he has such talent and determination, I wish him so much luck and all the votes he could wish for."



Weston College student George Shelley, 19

Want your college or training provider to appear on these pages?

Send your stories with pictures to news@feweek.co.uk including names, ages and course of students where applicable

Clary becomes beans-talk of the town



From left: Lee Mead, Jeffrey Holland, student Luke Connolly, 17, Julian Clary, student Richard Wisby, 17, Shireen Jordan, from radio station Wave 105 and Nigel Havers

Comedian Julian Clary called on the help of students at a Hampshire college to promote their pantomime.

Fellow stars of Jack and the Beanstalk, including actor Nigel Havers and singer Lee Mead, also spent a day at City College Southampton to boost the ITV Meridian production.

The media students created TV and local radio adverts..

Meanwhile theatre students ran the sound and lighting for the climax of the day — a performance and talk from the pantomime cast at the college's 240-seat theatre.

And catering and hospitality students also

played their part, serving drinks and food at a new £34m college building.

Television and film student Luke Connolly, 17, said: "I was a bit starstruck at first, but it was such a great opportunity so I quickly pulled myself together to get some great footage.

"It was really useful to have that experience."

Jonathan Kiley, pantomime director, said: "It was great to be able to use the fantastic facilities of City College for our launch and to give students real-life work experience with the biggest pantomime producer in the business."

Stylist makes the Wella cut for Paris

Hairdressing apprentices at a Midlands college have shown off their latest creations to some of the country's hottest stylists.

Designs were paraded in front of celebrity hairdressers Royston Blythe and Nick Malenko and judged by a team of experts. The top stylists from each year group won a trip to the Wella Studios in Paris, including second year level two student Louise Minchin, 18, who works at the Rizzo Wellington salon, in Telford.

More than 250 stylists turned out to the event to see the hairstyles showcased as part of a fashion show at Wolverhampton Racecourse.



Louise Minchin, 18, (right) with her model

Media group make the Wright show



Back row, from left: Jamie Aston, 19, Jonathan Allpress, 18, Matthew Wright, Alex Snelson, 17, and Max Harrison, 19. Front row, from left: Lauren Griffiths, 18, Sam Steel, 17, and James Hope, 18

Cheshire students were beamed into living rooms up and down the country when they appeared on a Channel 5 show The Wright Stuff.

More than a dozen creative media production BTec level three student from South Cheshire College made the trip to the Princess Productions Studio in Queensway, London.

They met host Matthew Wright and show guests Sky Sports presenter Georgie Thompson and author Anthony Horowitz.

They also got a behind-the-scenes tour of the studio and got a talk from Mr Wright on his

journalism career.

Media groups have taken part in the trip since 2007, giving them the chance to see how a live show is filmed and how a TV studio operates.

Media lecturers Iain Fox and Linda Buchanan joined the students on the trip.

"This is a trip that we have run for a number of years now and it was a great chance for students to see a live show, which is an established programme on the Channel 5 rota, in the making," said Mr Fox.



From left: Sarah Stevenson, Adam Holloway, and Michael Burton, all 18

Video proves fitting test for students

Yorkshire college students have been helping three times taekwondo world champion with her new fitness project.

Doncaster College television and film students Adam Holloway and Michael Burton have been videoing Sarah's new venture The Fitness Project — a campaign hoping to teach people how they can apply Olympic training to their own fitness regimes.

Olympic bronze medallist Sarah said: "I would like to say a big thank you to the amazing students at Doncaster College and tutor John Stopforth, who worked tirelessly to

help get The Fitness Project up and running in such a short space of time."

The ex-Doncaster College student added: "Their professionalism was to the highest standard and I know they are keen to offer new ideas for the next time and I'm really looking forward to working with them all again."

Adam said: "It was a great experience working with Sarah on a professional brief. We had to light and direct Sarah's performance ourselves so it was a great learning curve".

To watch The Fitness Project go to www.thefitnessproject.co.uk

Course to accelerate taxi driver skills

Sheffield taxi driver Mohammed Miah is among the first to have done a new course that trains would-be cabbies in customer service skills, including transporting people with disabilities.

So far, 220 students have completed the BTec level two certificate introduction to the role of the professional taxi and private hire driver.

The one-week course was launched at The Sheffield College in January and is one of the first of its kind in the country.

It is mandatory for all aspiring cabbies including hackney and mini cab drivers in Sheffield and is the brainchild of the local city council and accredited by Edexcel.

Students have to do the course before they can successfully apply to the council for a licence.



Taxi driver Mohammed Miah, 38

Guitar physicist on song for new laboratory



From left: Leamington Spa MP Chris White, Warwick Council chair Michael Kinson, Dr Mark Lewney and deputy principal John Rees

Rock doc Mark Lewney launched Midland college's new laboratories.

Dr Lewney, who uses music as he presents science under the name Guitar Physicist, visited the Warwickshire College's Leamington Spa centre to open the facilities.

The college's three new laboratories

feature state-of-the-art facilities, including an iPad-linked Apple TV, interactive whiteboards, 3D television screens, large LCD monitors, digital microscopes and other hi-tech audiovisual facilities. Dr Lewney said: "It's amazing to see science thriving and the resources for science being achieved here."

FE Week event report

SquadUK celebrates a ‘fantastic’



Shane Mann

@shanermann

The jubilant SquadUK team returned to home soil last week following a triumphant EuroSkills performance.

The squad came back with seven medals and 11 medallions of excellence to claim a worthy seventh place in the medals table.

A world famous F1 race track is not the first place that springs to mind when thinking about locations for an international skills competition, but that's exactly where the Belgian organising committee of this year's EuroSkills decided to host the event.

Spa-Francorchamps, in Belgium, was transformed into a site packed with HGV drivers, landscape gardeners, culinary experts, visual merchandisers and refrigeration experts, among others as it hosted to the third biennial EuroSkills.

The three-day competition tested more than 450 young people from 23 European countries. Competitors were challenged in more than 40 skills, from plumbing, cookery and web design to mechatronics, floristry and hairdressing.

The event attracted around 40,000 visitors over the duration, including college students, apprentices, and businesses and, on day two of the competition, Belgium's Queen Paola.

The venue was a hive of activity throughout, with emotions constantly running high.

Every skill had its own designated area within various zones during 20 hours of competition. Visitors could also take part at CurioCity — EuroSkills' very own "have-a-go" style area, where a hands-on experience of a wide range of technical and scientific professions was on offer.

SquadUK, which is managed by the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), sent a team of 23 competitors to this year's

competition along with 16 skills experts.

Many SquadUK competitors used the event as part of their training for a place in the team that will represent the UK at WorldSkills Leipzig 2013, the world's largest international skills competition.

Competing in any competition is a challenging and emotive experience for anybody, but competing in an international competition is exceptionally tough. *FE Week* caught up with Philip Glasgow, 21, from Cookstown, Northern Ireland, who competed in the carpentry skill with Gareth Jones, 19, from Wales.

"We were selected only a few months ago, and I have not previously worked with Gareth, but we think we have done well," said Philip.

"Better than we thought we were going to do. Luckily enough, we have worked together well.

"The next 24 hours are some of the toughest; we have done all we can do, but now have to wait for the results. We will try and relax, but it's not going to be easy.

"The experience has certainly been one to remember, I think the toughest part of the competition has been the adjustment to surroundings, and that we are not following our normal routine."

WorldSkills UK was keen to emphasise the importance of these competitions for the UK, but also to the competitors. During the competition there was a genuine sentiment among all those involved that competing at EuroSkills was not simply about winning, but being part of the experience. Kevin Calpin, training manager for stonemasonry, said: "It's important to remember that we have six of the best kids in Europe here for stonemasonry. This is as tough as it can get. I always say that I am proud of my competitors.

"When they can walk away from the competition and know that they have done their best. He [Robert Bromsgrove, stonemasonry competitor] does not have to

win a medal for me to be proud of him."

While touring the competition site, Jaïne Bolton, chief operating officer at NAS, spoke to *FE Week* about the role of training experts. "Our team of training experts and performance coaches are an invaluable part of our team here in Belgium and in fact any skills competition," she said.

"For many of our competitors, EuroSkills was their first exposure to a major competition. It is a challenging environment physically and mentally.

"Before competing at EuroSkills, competitors spent time with their training expert to hone their technical skills and ability as well as develop the focus and attitude needed to perform under pressure.

"Training experts, performance coaches and competitors are on this journey together – competitors are clear that they would not be able achieve without the support and guidance they receive from their training expert."

Given that this competition was treated as part of their training programme and that many competitors were new to competitions at this level, SquadUK's achievements in Belgium should be celebrated. The UK achieved three gold medals (one in hairdressing and two in carpentry), two silver medals in visual merchandising and two bronze medals in both painting & decorating and stonemasonry.

In addition to achieving these medals SquadUK competitors were also awarded 11 medallions of excellence. The medallion of excellences goes to competitors achieving a points score of at least 500.

Hannah Clague, 21, from Gloucester, attends Red Edge Training Company. She won a hairdressing gold medal and best in nation award. "It is amazing to have won the gold medal in hairdressing and to be named best in nation for SquadUK at EuroSkills 2012," she said.

"This is such a confidence boost and I hope it will help my career and show other young people that with determination and practice they too can have great careers."

Speaking to *FE Week* after Sunday's closing ceremony Mrs Bolton said: "Tonight's results are fantastic and something for every member of SquadUK to feel proud of.

"Congratulations to each and every member of SquadUK. The results tonight reflect the level of energy, enthusiasm and commitment shown by everyone in the team.

"Our performance at EuroSkills has showcased our talented young people and training experts. We want the UK's performance at EuroSkills to inspire more young people, and more training experts in the FE sector, just like the London Olympics inspired so many young people to participate in sports.

"We came to EuroSkills to provide SquadUK with the ultimate pressure test ahead of the next WorldSkills International skills competition in Leipzig next year.

"To win medals as well is amazing and a real testament to everyone in our team and to the many employers, colleges and training providers and suppliers that support WorldSkills UK."

SquadUK members who did not compete at EuroSkills will take part in other competitions and industry events as part of their training programmes.

This includes WorldSkills UK – The Skills Show, which takes place from November 15-17 at the NEC Birmingham.

SquadUK members in beauty therapy, cooking and confectionery will be in training at The Skills Show, demonstrating their skills to visitors and showcasing how skills competitions can drive up levels of expertise.

SquadUK gave it their all in Belgium, but it was only the beginning of their bid to secure a place in the UK's team for the WorldSkills 2013 in Leipzig next June.

EuroSkills 2012



I don't know if you've been told
SquadUK are going for gold
We can beat any test
Because SquadUK are the best
We know that we will go far
Because we are the best in Spa
The SquadUK chant



From top left (clockwise): Squad UK members arriving at the closing ceremony last Sunday evening; Georgina Briscoe (health & social care), from North Warwickshire & Hinckley College and Gareth Humphreys (electronics), from Wigan; Hannah Clague (hairdressing), from Gloucester and her training manager Robert Rousseau celebrating her gold medal; NAS CEO David Way flying the flag for SquadUK at the closing ceremony. All photos by Ellis O'Brien, except the one of Georgina and Gareth, taken by Shane Mann.

Q&A with Simon Bartley, president of WorldSkills International

You have just arrived at EuroSkills 2012, what is it you look forward to seeing at the competitions and what will you be looking for?

Here at Spa-Fancorchamps I'm going to be looking out for what I always look for at these competitions, whether it be a national, regional or international event. I'm looking for young people working at fever pitch, while they produce the high level work that we expect.

As I walk around I am looking forward to seeing the hope in their eyes and the hard work sweat on their brow.

Of course, as president, I'm also looking at the infrastructure behind the event that the European organising committee has put together. Any competition faces many different challenges – we are not at the easiest of venues for EuroSkills this year. Typically, our competitions are held at exhibition centres, like that of WorldSkills 2011 at ExCeL London. Holding EuroSkills 2012 at a race track has posed many challenges, so I'm intrigued by how they overcame these issues. From what I can see they have put on a good show. I will also be looking out for lessons that we can learn in time for World Skills 2013.

Moving onto to next year's WorldSkills competition in Leipzig, what lessons, if any, were learned from London 2011?

I think that we can divide London into two sections. Firstly, what did the hosting of the event achieve for the UK and secondly how this then influenced future competitions. Every competition is different in its character and needs. No one show is the same, and therefore it is incredibly important for us to look back at past events in great detail and be aware of what worked well and what did not. In terms of what it did for the UK, every country will have their individual legacy requirements. The UK's were

ambitious, with plans for its first national skills competition – The Skills Show.

Looking at London, as with so much in life, there were issues with the IT infrastructure. The IT required for these competitions is phenomenal, from public-facing websites, scoring systems and equipment that competitors will use in their event. IT is something that London would accept did not go as well as it could have done. We are going to placing more emphasis on the IT infrastructure for Leipzig, their organising committee were at London, so have seen first-hand what is needed.

You touched on London's legacy previously, clearly this was a key focus of WorldSkills London 2011, but what can we expect to see?

The legacy of WorldSkills London did not just happen, it was central to the original bid back at Sydney 2004. The Germans will be looking at developing their own legacy requirement around the 2013 competition. Hosting WorldSkills is a massive investment for business and governments. London 2011 cost around £45m and of course that does not include the valuable time that training managers provide as volunteers.

Legacy is something that should form a natural part of any bid and we should expect it. I can guarantee that all upcoming bids will have a key focus on legacy – what it will bring for young people, business and the country. It's the reason why a country decides to host competition – just the same as the Olympics in London.

The Skills Show is one of the legacies of London 2011, is this a challenging ambition?

I have to say that of all the legacies from London 2011, The Skills Show is certainly the big one. What has impressed me the most is that NAS and the organisers are going to be staging



Shane Mann (right) interviewing Simon Bartley on the final day of EuroSkills 2012, at the Spa-Francorchamps race track, Belgium

a competition of this size with less than quarter of the time we had to plan London 2011.

The key challenge that they face is of course time. But also the logistical challenges that staging a competition of this size can pose. There is lots of planning involved from sponsorship agreements to garnering enough volunteers. This is the first of three UK skills shows – they seem to have bitten off an enormous amount. The moment the show finishes in November, the priority must be for them to review, reflect and start planning 2013's event. Another challenge for the show will be

ensuring a strong attendance from local and surrounding schools – will it be as successful as London? I really do believe that NAS will do good job of bringing people together to ensure a good event. For the visitors, they are coming to an event, to see a performance, they want excitement, it's not just about competition for them.

It is also important that The Skills Show is used to change attitudes towards vocational qualifications, demonstrate the various pathways they open and vocational qualification can lead to success.

FE Week at The Skills Show

With just a month to go, the team at FE Week is gearing up for The Skills Show at Birmingham's NEC arena.

The image to the right is a mock-up of our exhibition stand and it's a replica of our office in Greenwich.

The FE Week team will be at The Skills shows producing that week's paper. And we wanted to feel at home – and of course we want to invite you to see us in action.

The stand has been designed to look like our HQ, from the marble fire place to the dark wood flooring. The only thing missing will be the wine bar next door. We want to make our stand interactive and most of all fun.

Make sure you visit the show and most importantly pop your head into the FE Week office and say 'hi'.

Meet the FE Week team and see first-hand the blood, sweat and tears that go into every edition.

The Skills Show is taking place November 15-17, and tickets can be booked on The Skills Show website.




worldskillsuk
The Skills Show

Media Partner


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London Learning Consortium (LLC) is the City's largest and growing Third Sector Consortium. As a Community Interest Company (CIC), we offer learning and employment services to individuals, employees and employers to enable social and economic prosperity, enterprise and growth.

Due to continued growth and expansion we are now looking to develop and strengthen our team by recruiting a full time MIS Officer to support the delivery of the highest quality learner data management.

We are looking for an enthusiastic team player with excellent organisational, problem solving, and analytical skills which may be complemented by a detailed understanding of the Individual Learning Record (ILR), Learning Aims Reference Application (LARA) and the Learner Information System (LIS). The ability to work flexibly to tight timescales is essential.

The post holder will be responsible for producing statistical reports and will be comfortable handling and interpreting complex data. Competent use of MS Office products, email and the internet is essential

Location: Croydon, Surrey

Closing Date: Noon, 31th October 2012

For a full job specification, job description and application form, please see the <http://www.londonlc.org.uk/news> web page or contact I.stansfield@londonlc.org.uk

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BW Consultants are specialists in bespoke quality improvement services. In response to high demand from the sector, including support for private training providers, we are looking to strengthen our team of self-employed associate consultants and are inviting applications from suitably qualified professionals with recent experience of the new Common Inspection Framework. There may also be opportunities for part-time and interim management posts.

You will be a current Ofsted inspector with a strong track record in your curriculum area, be highly motivated, flexible and fully conversant with the issues facing the FE sector. You will also need to be prepared to travel and stay away from home when required.

In return we offer competitive daily rates and a friendly and supportive environment for our associates. We are interested in hearing from inspectors across all SSAs including those with experience in work based learning.

Closing date for applications is 12 Noon on Friday 2nd November 2012.

Interviews will take place on 9th November in Birmingham.

To apply please send your CV for the attention of Karen Brooks by email to info@bw-consultants.co.uk or for an informal discussion about the post call Julie Hughes on (07841) 210335.

BW Consultants is the quality improvement division of **FE Associates**



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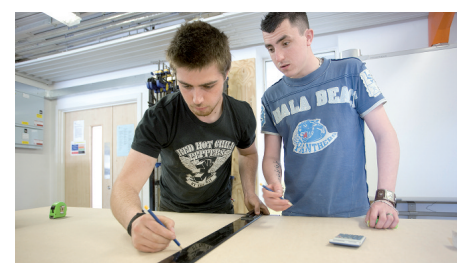
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Stockton Riverside College is looking to recruit an inspirational and motivational leader to take the college to its next stage of development. In return for substantial leadership skills and the passion to provide the very best experience for our learners, the new Principal will receive the full support of the Governing Body and an excellent forward-thinking leadership team.

If your ambition matches ours then information about this appointment, our college and the local area is available on our website: www.stockton.ac.uk/inspire

The closing date for this position is 12pm on Wednesday 24th October. First interviews will take place on Thursday 8th November, with second interviews taking place on Monday 12th November 2012.

We are working with College Leadership Services on this important appointment. You are welcome to have an informal discussion about this position in confidence with Simon Graham, Director of College Leadership Services. Appointments to speak with Simon should be made via Helen Anderson at handerson@collegeleadership.co.uk or on 0115 911 1117.

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Can you help transform education, learning and skills in England?



We're looking for exceptional candidates to join us to help drive improvement in education and learning in England. You will be in a position to make a major difference to the lives of children and learners; a challenge but a real privilege.

Senior HMI (Her Majesty's Inspector), Education, Learning and Skills

£80,000 salary package + performance related pay and benefits + opportunities for additional recompense for National Lead responsibilities

Reporting to a Regional Director, you will manage and lead a team of HMI to deliver high quality inspection and improvement activity across an allocated area of England. Drawing on our unique inspection evidence, you will help focus our work where it can make the most difference to children and learners. You will challenge weaker services to improve, and highlight good practice so others can learn from it.

You will be an expert in your field, a strong corporate leader with excellent people management and training skills and have the ability to drive a high performance culture.

HMI (Her Majesty's Inspector), Education, Learning and Skills

£69,088 salary package + performance related pay and benefits + opportunities for additional recompense for National Lead responsibilities

Reporting to a Senior HMI, you will lead and deliver high impact inspection across an allocated area of England developing a critical understanding of each provider within your caseload to support their improvement. You will deliver best practice seminars to a range of audiences, both small and large, disseminating the learning from inspection.

You will be an experienced professional within your sector with a deep understanding of current issues. You will be an excellent communicator, demonstrating resilience and the ability to challenge openly and honestly.

We want to reflect in our workforce the diversity of all children, young people and learners, so we're keen to encourage applications from all communities and backgrounds.

Ofsted is an equal opportunities employer. We value people's differences.



To download an application pack, please visit www.ofsted.gov.uk/working-for-ofsted or call 0300 123 1231.

Closing date: 12 noon, Friday 26th October 2012.



Principal

£120k or more for an exceptional candidate, plus benefits

Due to the current Principal retiring next year West Cheshire College is seeking someone to take the College forward while maintaining its reputation for meeting the needs of employers and growing its income and customer and student base. The College prides itself on 'doing it differently' and delivering 'access to opportunity'.

We are looking for a forward thinking dynamic and progressive leader with a passion for vocational education and training offering the opportunity for everyone to successfully enter employment.

The successful candidate for this post will have developed a strong vision for the college but be able to have an adaptable and flexible approach in how to achieve this. They must be able to rise to the challenge of being innovative and imaginative within a diverse financial environment, and use learning as a tool to re-engage people with work and to take advantage of the superb vocational facilities on our campuses, our highly skilled and expert staff, and the productive partnerships we have with employers and agencies.

The successful applicant will have a track record of success in leading growth, innovation and change and an understanding of the needs of a wide range of learners from all backgrounds and of all ages. The ideal candidate will have a proven ability to establish and maintain partnerships for the good of the college and the community that it serves.

Closing date: 21st October 2012
Assessment Days: 15th & 16th November 2012

For further details please visit www.west-cheshire.ac.uk



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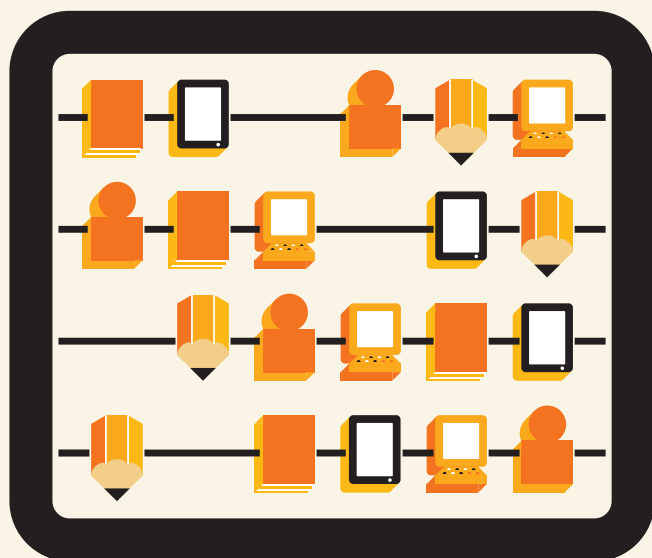
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FE Week Sudoku challenge

6								8
	3			9			7	
	4	7	1		5	6	9	
		8	6		7	1		
	6							2
		2	4		9	8		
	2	9	3		1	7	8	
	7			6				1
1								9

Difficulty:
EASY

How to play: Fill in all blank squares making sure that each row, column and 3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9

Solutions: Next week

	3		8		5	1		
					3			8
	8	5	4	7				
6						2		3
	5							1
9		1						7
				1	8	6	7	
7			9					
		6	2		7		4	

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Last Week's solutions

5	6	2	7	4	1	3	8	9
3	1	9	2	6	8	7	5	4
8	4	7	5	9	3	2	6	1
9	2	5	6	3	4	8	1	7
4	3	6	8	1	7	5	9	2
1	7	8	9	2	5	4	3	6
6	8	3	4	7	9	1	2	5
2	5	4	1	8	6	9	7	3
7	9	1	3	5	2	6	4	8

Difficulty:
EASY

9	5	3	1	4	2	8	7	6
8	6	2	3	5	7	1	9	4
4	7	1	8	9	6	3	5	2
7	2	9	6	3	1	5	4	8
6	4	5	2	8	9	7	1	3
1	3	8	5	7	4	6	2	9
2	1	4	7	6	8	9	3	5
5	9	6	4	1	3	2	8	7
3	8	7	9	2	5	4	6	1

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

FE Week mini-mascot

Follow the adventures of *FE Week's* biggest and smallest fan!



"Mostly this week I have been cooking the conkers I found in Greenwich Park"

You can also follow our *FE Week* mini-mascot on Twitter @daniellinford